

# SAFE WATER AND WASTE DISPOSAL FACILITIES

## ISSUE

Safe and adequate water supply and waste disposal facilities are lacking in approximately 12% of American Indian and Alaska Native homes, compared to 1% of homes for the U.S. general population.

## BACKGROUND

Families with satisfactory environmental conditions in their homes, which include safe water and sewerage systems, require approximately 75% fewer medical services and place fewer demands on the Indian Health Service (IHS) and Tribal primary health care delivery system. The Indian Sanitation Facilities Act, P.L. 86-121, authorizes the IHS to provide essential sanitation facilities, such as safe drinking water and adequate sewerage systems, to Indian homes and communities. The IHS Sanitation Facilities Construction Program has been the primary provider of these services since 1960. During this period, approximately 275,000 homes have been served with water and sewerage facilities.

## SITUATION

While 1% of the U.S. general population lacks safe water and sewerage systems, 12% of Indian homes lack these systems. In some parts of Indian country, up to 35% of homes lack these systems.

There is a backlog of 3,052 needed sanitation facilities construction projects. The cost to provide all American Indians and Alaska Natives with safe drinking water and adequate sewerage systems in their homes is estimated to be \$2 billion. With inflation, new environmental legislation requirements, and population growth, the current sanitation appropriations are not reducing the backlog. In addition to providing safe sanitation facilities to existing homes, the IHS also provides sanitation facilities to new homes.

## OPTIONS/PLANS

The IHS, in consultation with Tribes, continues to identify sanitation facilities needs. The IHS and Tribes will continue to collaborate with other Federal agencies, States, and other sources to provide needed resources for these essential facilities. In order to reduce the backlog of sanitation facilities needed to serve existing homes in 10 years, the total Sanitation Facilities Construction appropriation will require a 65% increase. This higher level of appropriation would also address the sanitation facilities for all new homes being constructed annually.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For referral to the appropriate spokesperson, contact the IHS Public Affairs Staff at 301-443-3593.

